

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable consideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-12 are pending in this application. Claim 1 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 2-4 and 6-8 have been amended to be rewritten in independent form and Claims 3 and 9 have been amended to correct minor typographical errors, all without the introduction of any new matter.

The outstanding Official Action presented an objection to Claims 2-10 as depending on a rejected claim, a rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishikawa (U.S. Patent No. 4,297,423), and a rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Zheng et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,734,443, Zheng).

Applicants acknowledge with gratitude the allowance of Claims 11 and 12 and the indication that Claims 2-10 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In order to expedite prosecution of this application, Applicants have canceled Claim 1 without prejudice or disclaimer in order to render the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishikawa and the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Zheng moot.

In addition, Applicants have amended Claims 2-4 and 6-8 to be rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of base independent Claim 1, there being no intervening claims. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 2-4 and 6-8 should also be considered to be allowable.

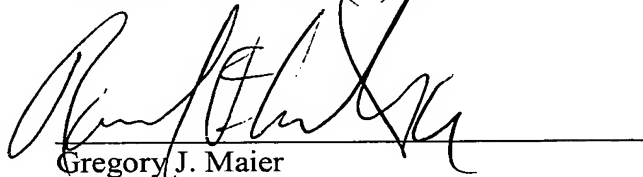
As Claim 5 depends from rewritten independent Claim 4 and Claims 9 and 10 depend from rewritten independent Claim 8, it is respectfully submitted that dependent Claims 5, 9, and 10 should also be considered to be allowable as depending from a rewritten independent claim that should be considered allowable.

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Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that no further issues remain outstanding in the present application, and that this application is clearly in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Maier', is written over a horizontal line.

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